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## V. Death and Burial

### A. Death

What is death? What happens after death? What causes death? Let us see what are the answers given by the Isneg to these very interesting and all important questions, and examine them in detail.

#### *1. Concept of Death*

Death, if I understand the Isneg mind well, is a change by which a person ceases to exist as an ordinary human being, and, in the state of a *kaduduwá*[3] (soul?), continues to live indefinitely, ultimately at least in the realm of the dead, leaving behind an *innát* (corpse).

This definition needs some explanation.

Death is "a change". I purposely refrain from calling it "a separation or disconnection of two parts", as I doubt very much if the Isneg explicitly consider man, while alive, to consist of more than one element. They know that man has a *baggí* (body), and to this they usually refer as "he (she)" while a person is alive; but I know of no expressions that would lead one to believe that the Isneg explicitly recognize in man two elements which would correspond to our "body" and "soul". Man, while alive, has a *baggí* (body), and the natives do not seem to enter further into the question of his nature. Nevertheless they most certainly believe implicitly that man is composed of two essential parts, as may be proved by the following:

First, when talking about a *kaduduwá* (soul?), they always refer to it as *ya kaduduwána*, "the soul(?) of *him, his* soul(?)", which seems to imply that this *kaduduwá* belongs to him, thus that it is not exactly his own complete self, but only a part of him. It is true that, when speaking about a person after death and not explicitly mentioning the term *kaduduwá*, they simply refer to his *kaduduwá* as "he (she)" without any further qualifications, as if the body, as we understand it, did not belong to him (her) any more; but this does not exclude the fact that, whenever they use the term *kaduduwá*, they always call it "his (her)" *kaduduwá, ya kaduduwána*.

Second, the Isneg know very well that the dead body and the *kaduduwá* belong to one and the same person, as will be seen presently when referring to the tattooing of the body and the clothing of the *innát*, which, the natives believe, greatly influence the state of the *kaduduwá*. Thus, in their eyes, the *kaduduwá* and the *innát* are not exactly strangers to one another. Besides, the objects that are

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761 Besides, the objects that are
placed in the coffin at burial are supposed to be used, not by the
775 corpse, but by the *kaduduwá*, so that the connection between the two
764 continues at least for a certain period after death. Add to this that the *balańóbáń* or revivified *innát* is also definitely known to belong to the dead person as well as his *kaduduwá:* this is proved by the fact that the transformation of the corpse into a *balańóbáń* is supposed to depend on the character of the person, while the latter was still alive, all of which will be explained in due time.

774 Third, the term *kaduduwá* itself. Semantically, and perhaps lin-
197 guistically, the Isneg term *kaduduwá* corresponds to the Iloko term
775 *kararuá*, "soul". Semantically: both terms have probably an identical meaning; anyhow they most certainly refer to one and the same thing: the spirit of man that continues to live after death. Perhaps linguistically: when we compare several Filipino languages with one another, it is clearly seen that *d* and *r* very often interchange; for instance: Ibanag *nararál* and Iloko *nadadáel* (destroyed), Isneg *matúdog* and Iloko *matúrog* (to sleep), Isneg *adú* and Ibanag *arú* (many). *A* and *o* or *u*, when not bearing the accent, are often interchanged, or at least their pronunciation is blurred and they are hardly to be distinguished from one another; for instance: Isneg *maxudódit* and *maxadódit* (to tell a story), *obóbát* and *abóbát* (the ceremony that concludes the period of mourning). And so, linguistically, the distance between Iloko *kararuá* (pronounced *kararuwá*) and Isneg *kaduduwá* does not seem to be very great.

Etymologically, however, Isneg *kaduduwá* and Iloko *kararuá* seem to be entirely different; on the contrary, the Isneg term *kaduduwá* and the Iloko *kaduá* (pronounced *kaduwá*) are one etymologically, although seemingly very different semantically: as *kaduá* in Iloko means "companion", which in Isneg is rendered by *kabbulón*. Both Isneg *kaduduwá* and Iloko *kaduá* are composed of the stem *duwá* (written *duá* in Iloko), "two", partly reduplicated in Isneg, and the prefix *ka*, indicating companionship, concomitance, etc., in both languages.

In view of all this it seems reasonable to infer that the Isneg seem to consider the spirit that continues to live after death, not exactly as a companion (in this case they would call it *kabbulón*), but as a part of something, a counterpart, something that goes with something else (prefix *ka*), and to which, in numbers, it would correspond as number "two (*duwá*)", not in time and successively or consecutively, but concomitantly (on account of the prefix *ka*).

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These three facts combined prove that the Isneg, at least implicitly, consider a living man as consisting of two elements: the *baggí* or body, of which no more mention is made after death, as an *inndt* (corpse) takes its place, and the *kaduduwá* or spiritual element that continues to live and is usually invisible.

Through death "a person ceases to exist as an ordinary human being". Indeed, the *kaduduwá*, although its life is similar in many respects to that of a living person on earth, is usually quite invisible and "continues to live indefinitely". I say "indefinitely": why not "eternally"? It must be remembered that the Isneg have no notion of eternity as such; they know that the *kaduduwá* continues to live, they never heard of a *kaduduwá* dying, but if it lives eternally, that goes beyond their comprehension, or, to be exact, they never think as far ahead as that. And so what looks to the Isneg as "indefinite" (living on indefinitely), if considered under our own viewpoint, would probably mean "eternal" (living on eternally). The corpse also is far from existing as an ordinary human being. Not that the Isneg consider it to be completely devoid of any animating principle, but that it is dead for the time being, and if it lives afterwards in the state of a *balańóbáń*, its life cannot be compared with that of an ordinary man.

The *kaduduwá* goes to live "ultimately at least in the realm of the dead". This will be explained more fully when referring to the state of man after death.

"Leaving behind an *inndt*". *Inndt* is the body of a man immediately after death, as long as it stays in the house, and before burial, if burial takes place. The *inndt* is dead, it neither moves nor breathes, it needs neither food nor drink. We shall see presently whether the Isneg believe all dead bodies to remain in that state, in the state of *inndt*, until decay sets in.

### 2. *Future Life*

What happens after death? And first as to the *kaduduwá*.

The night after a person's death (some say: "at any time after his death"; but this could never mean "immediately after death" on account of the necessity of the *inndt* being clothed), *Kútaw*, the ferryman, or rather the ferry spirit, comes along to bring the *kaduduwá* over the great pond (*lablabbáń*) to the realm of the dead. Here, according to some informants, the *kaduduwá* receives hospitality at *Kútaw*'s house until the latter brings it on its way to the house of its relatives who died before.

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but they have never yet been able to see a ghost without some vagueness surrounding it. It should be noted in this connection that a *balańóbāń* has nocturnal habits.

But what is the ultimate fate of a *balańóbāń*? To this question the Isneg can give a definite answer: all *balańóbāń* decay in the end at *Magkĕbińān*. *Magkĕbińān* is the name of a cave, the usual dwelling place of all *balańóbāń*, and there their wandering life comes to an end sooner or later. Nobody can tell you anything definite, however, about the location of this cave or about the duration of a dead body's life as a *balańóbāń*.

All Isneg are convinced that tombs of wandering *balańóbāń* are empty and remain so. Once out of its tomb, no *balańóbāń* ever comes back to its former abode. And only the very few stay in their tomb; the generality of them start on their temporary wanderings as soon as they have been in the grave for two or three nights, long enough to dislike such a residence. Occasionally a few informants even state that no dead bodies ever decay in their graves. Nobody of course would venture to dig in a tomb in order to convince himself of the truth of his belief.

### *3. Causes of Death*

What causes death? The Isneg seem to distinguish between two kinds of death, namely: what we would call "death by accident or death by violence", and "death from sickness". Under the Isneg viewpoint, however, the first kind of death has what I should like to call a "natural" cause, while the other kind has a "supernatural" cause.

Under the first head come all deaths whose cause is obvious and patent to everybody:

1. Death through murder or assassination (felonious homicide),—for instance, you plant a headax in the neck of your enemy and cut off his head. The Isneg, no more than anybody else, will doubt about the cause of your enemy's death. Here there is no necessity of suspecting the intervention of the spirits.

2. Death by accident or through judicial taking of life,—for instance, a man falls from a tree and breaks his neck, death ensuing, or a culprit is executed by the authorities, and so on. Here also the spirits are not considered as the immediate cause of death. To die like that is called *meránud* (past tense: *neránud*), while to die in general is called *matáy* (past tense: *natáy*). The stem *rānud*, in

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Ilokɔ means "communication, participation"; but in Isneg the term is very hard to translate. I shall give a couple of examples to illustrate its meaning:

In the case of death by accident, e.g., falling from a coconut tree: *ncránud xapó kiyá iyúg*, he died (*!*) on account of the coconut tree.

Christian Isneg explain Christian martyrdom in the same way: *ni San Pedro ncránud xapó kiyá ápo Dios*, St. Peter died (?) on account of (or: for) the Lord God.

Students say: *ni Rizal ncránud xapó kiyá ilina*, Rizal (the Filipino hero executed by the Spaniards in 1896) died (?) on account of (or: for) his country.

The other kind of death, which is obviously the most frequent and ordinary one, I call "supernatural" because the Isneg ascribe its cause to the intervention of the spirits. Death, in this case, is caused by the loss of the kidneys (*bokál*): some spirit, who is certainly to be classed under the malevolent ones, deprives a person of his kidneys and devours them, death being the inevitable result.

Among the spirits that are addicted to this destructive practice may be cited:

*Lúnwat*, who lives in bushy thickets;

*Xasíla-* or *Xasílaw:* after having devoured the kidneys, this spirit besmears with blood the leaves of the trees and herbs that grow on the mountain on which he has fixed his abode;

*Ápo*, who devours the kidneys of people who die of what we call dysentery;

*Maúlatón:* this is the real angel of death; he does away with the kidneys of all people who die on that account, except of course those that have been bereft of their kidneys by some other spirit. *Maúlatón* kills all those that are spurned by others, he is the kidney-eater and executioner *par excellence*.

The error of such a belief might easily be ascertained, but autopsy is unknown among the Isneg, and so it stands. The better to understand Isneg mentality, it should be borne in mind that sickness as such is never considered as the sole or immediate cause of death, and this for obvious reasons. The Isneg know only diseases that appear outwardly, as skin diseases (*buní* "tetter", *rasá*, "itch"), *daxón*, "fever", dysentery, beriberi, and so on, while diseases with no or only slight outward signs are entirely unknown to the natives. And so if a person dies from cardiopathy, pneumonia, diabetes, etc., the Isneg do not doubt for a single moment that some ill-minded imp

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761 753 776 must have intervened. With reference to the former class of ailments, some of them never cause death, except if they are coupled with further complications, while in the rest the symptoms (as passing of blood in dysentery, general swelling of the body in beriberi) are considered as the visible effect of the work initiated by a spirit inside the body.

In the same way, whenever some dangerous sickness fails to prove fatal and is overcome either by the strong constitution of the patient, or by some medicine, the Isneg attribute the cure, not to its real cause, but to the superior force of some spirit in league with the shaman, or to magic, all of which has subdued for the time being or completely driven away the terrible kidney-eater, who on that account has been unable to finish the work he began.

[177 757] After what has been said here, it should not be wondered at that doctors and nurses have a very difficult time with these people, who have little or no faith in their ministrations and consider medicines as either operating through magic (in case of a cure) or entirely useless. Most of the time, however, medicines are given no credit at all, and the cure is merely attributed to the work of the shaman, whose help is always invoked, even in those rare cases in which recourse has been had to natural means.

761 753 762 Suicide (*magbanól*, "to commit suicide") must be listed in the second class: its victims are supposed to die through the action of a kidney-hunter. Suicide, however, by hanging oneself (*magpattól*) or otherwise, not by jumping into the water (*malimát*, "to be drowned"), is rare among the Isneg. I know of only one case in recent times: a few years ago a person hanged himself at Utul, but I have not been able to discover the reason. Drowning oneself would certainly be shunned by Isneg, on account of the probability of the *innát* being lost and deprived of its necessary preparation for the acceptance of the *kaduduwá* by *Kútaw*. It is universally believed by the natives that the relatives of a person who died by drowning, whether voluntary or accidental, will continually dream about him at night; this seems to be a kind of revenge on the part of the deceased, probably out of spite for encountering so many difficulties on his way to the other world. That is one of the reasons why the Isneg so sedulously try to find the body of a drowned person even for weeks at a time; if the body is recovered and buried, no such dreams affect the relatives of the deceased.

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In general, it is said of a person who dies without anybody being aware of it (*maániaw*), whether by drowning or otherwise, that some part of his body will invariably appear in his house, and that the said part will tell the relatives the name of the deceased and the news of his death.

Death by cursing is also to be classified under the same heading. Indeed the Isneg never call it by the term *meránud*, and the kidneys of a person who dies on that account, are supposed to have been devoured as usual. Consequently it seems that, according to the Isneg viewpoint, the curse is not so much the immediate cause of death as a kind of summons to the spirits, by which they are invited to proceed to the stealing of a person's kidneys. To curse (*pakkawán;* past tense: *piñkawán;* from the stem *pakkáw,* "shouting") is done shouting, and in such a way as to cause the adversary to hear the curse pronounced against him. The result is instantaneous; the cursed person gradually becomes thinner and thinner, and finally dies. Nevertheless not all curses are intended to entail the death of a person. It may happen, for instance, if you are a thief, that people will pray that some part of your body become diseased or destroyed; in this case you will be *malbág,* and the person who cursed you is said to *manadál* (to destroy, to deteriorate).

To resume: the Isneg consider all deaths from disease (including suicide and death by cursing) to be caused by a kidney-eating spirit, while deaths by accident or by violence are considered as natural, there being at the same time a kind of connection between death and the object or person that took part in it, either because this object or person constitutes a kind of mediate (the coconut tree from which a person falls) or immediate cause (the authorities who execute a culprit, a headhunter who kills an enemy), or because it is the final cause, *causa finalis* (God, in the case of a martyr; one's country, in the case of a patriot). All deaths by accident or by violence, except felonious homicide, come under the denomination *meránud.*

### B. BURIAL AND MOURNING

#### *1. Death till Burial*

Let us now enter the house of a dying Isneg. The poor man is very sick, it has even been rumored about that he is actually very near death, that he can hardly articulate a sound (*mañgassát*). The *dorarákit* or shamaness has used all means in her power to avert the

Do not jump over a child. If you do, his growth will be retarded. 784

At first glance one might think that life in Apayao is greatly restricted by the necessity of placating all the *anitos* and of observing the many auguries, omens, and prohibitions. But, after being around some, I cannot help getting the impression somehow, that all this is partly just the men's sly way to getting out of a lot of hard work and disagreeable duties. At least, the placating of the *anitos* gives them the occasion for many very pleasant social times. 771 784 787 782 781

## BURIAL

When death comes, the Apayaos, unlike the Christians, do not dread it as being the end of life on this earth; for the spirit *cadudorosa*, continues to exist somewhere and enjoy many of their physical pleasures without the discomforts. The people respect these spirits and go to great pains to see that they are made happy, both during the funeral ceremony and also during the following years. At all the feasts a portion of the best food and *basi* is placed on a plate, which is then set near the stove where the immediate supply of rice is kept. The people want to keep the spirits of their ancestors happy and contented for, if one should become discontented, he will select a person in the house to keep him company. The person then becomes sick and will die if a feast is not held to make that spirt happy and contented again. 761 775 769 [753]

When a person dies, all the relatives immediately gather in his house and hold a *callas* in his memory. 764